

“We build a city first with words, and then with bricks.” – Winston Churchill

Date: April 15, 2009

TO: Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee

FROM: Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee Outreach Subcommittee

RE: Neighborhood Plan Update Outreach Concerns

Dear fellow members of the City of Seattle Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee:

We, the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee Outreach Subcommittee, want to express our serious concerns about the process which the City is currently engaged in to update neighborhood plans in Southeast Seattle. We believe that the integrity of the process is being threatened by a timeline which does not allow for input from the Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee (NPAC), and, hence, is not structured in a way that allows for true neighborhood involvement.

Our primary concerns are as follows:

- The process is moving so quickly that the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) and the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) were not able to submit information such as workshop agendas, workshop formats, and Planning Outreach Liaison Biographies in a timely manner to NPAC and/or the Outreach Subcommittee. NPAC is charged with reviewing these documents and providing advice/recommendations/guidance *before implementation* in accordance with Council Ordinance Number 122799. To date, DON and DPD have not met the requirements laid out in Council Ordinance 122799. As a result, we request that the deadline for Southeast Seattle Plan Updates be extended to May 2010, to ensure more time for NPAC involvement as well as additional workshops in the community, more neighborhood plan education, broader outreach efforts, and a full review of the Plan Update process to date, together by NPAC, City Council, DPD and DON.
- It is our belief that Southeast neighborhoods that spent vast amounts of time preparing their Neighborhood Plans now feel that their work is not being acknowledged. Council Ordinance 122799 states the following principle: *“Focus on strengthening and renewing relationships with neighborhood organizations, neighborhood councils, business groups, stewardship groups, immigrant and refugee groups and other under-represented groups, interested individuals, etc.”* Many of the original planners, community participants and stewardship groups were not contacted for input and many community leaders have not been included in the outreach process to date. The current timeline under which DPD and DON are operating is not allowing for adequate outreach to occur in the three station area communities. People are a neighborhood’s most precious asset and many in Southeast have a wealth of wisdom about their communities. This wisdom must be tapped and leveraged so that public funds are not wasted in this planning endeavor, requiring needless duplication of efforts later on.
- In terms of the DON and DPD outreach to date, we are concerned that City employees with a vested interest in the outcome of the Neighborhood Planning Workshops are staffing and facilitating these workshops, as they will the Town Hall Meetings scheduled

for May. There is a distinct impression amongst some neighborhood activists in Southeast Seattle that this is a top-down process, driven by the City, with only token input from the communities, rather than a community-driven process. Ordinance 122799 clearly states in Principle 11 that the process should “*make best use of and respect the extensive community knowledge, expertise, and passion for Seattle that exists in all our neighborhoods*”. To ensure that updated plans are successful and validated by neighborhoods, we suggest training and using existing community members and/or hiring trained facilitators to staff all future outreach events. In doing so, the process will build planning leadership from within each community and create lasting trust between the City and neighborhoods.

- NPAC members are a diverse and committed group of community members. We are volunteers and we each bring a unique perspective and time commitment to the Neighborhood Plan Update process. To ensure that our expertise is used wisely and capably, we must receive information from DPD and DON in a timely manner that allows for full NPAC participation in this process. While we believe that additional subcommittees (and thus time) are necessary for the efficient functioning of the NPAC, the creation of new NPAC subcommittees should *absolutely not* replace the duties of either DON or DPD as laid out in Ordinance 122799.

We request that the full NPAC consider these concerns and take action for correction of the above issues before the City progresses with the May Town Hall Meetings.

Sincerely,

The NPAC Outreach Subcommittee

Adrienne Bailey, Central Area Neighborhood District Council

Judith Edwards, North Beacon Hill Council

Edward Hill, City Council At Large

Brian Ramey, Alternate, Lake Union District Council

Renee Staton, North District Council

Kate Stineback, City Council At Large

CC: Sally Clark, Seattle City Council & Chair, Planning Land Use &
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Diane M. Sugimura, Director, Department of Planning and Development

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